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## Five families the rise decline and resurgence

1A fiery saint If I betray my friends and family, I and my soul will burn in hell like this saint. As Tony Accetturo recited this grave oath, the holy image in his hand perished in the flames.... READ THE EXTRAIT COMPLET → A classic report by a man who knows the bloody, brutal, corrupt territory. -Mike Wallace, 60 MinutesIn more than fifty years as a journalist, there is no journalist I have respected more than Selwyn Raab at the New York Times to cover New York's criminal justice system. He was tireless and thorough in investigating the investigators, sometimes helping to prove innocence, but equally just and conscientious in the cases that ended in a conviction. His fascinating book will I'm sure the definitive story of the mafia in New York for a long time to come. It is a model of what journalism can be. —NAT HENTOFFAfter eight decades of racing in which its leaders built the most powerful criminal organization in U.S. history, the American mafia began to unravel at the end of the 20th century. He did so in a convulsion of blood and betrayal, fueled by out-of-control egos. Selwyn Raab was there, in the streets, the houses of the police station and the courtrooms to record this story. No one does it better. - TOM ROBBINS, Reporter, Village Voice - Since 1974, Selwyn Raab has been a reporter for The New York Times and has won dozens of awards for her coverage of the Mafia. He has appeared countless times in local and national news programs and in documentaries on the mafia for the history channel and A and A E. More than a newsmen, he is also something of a crusader, having played an important role in the exhibition of fabricated testimonies surrounding the conviction of Rubin Hurricane Carter. Raab is also the author of Justice in the Back Room which was the basis of the legendary television series Kojak and the very successful Mob Lawyer, which shed new light on who killed Jimmy Hoffa and JFK. MORE BLOG BILLETS - Thomas Dunne Books Donec in lectus iaculis vulputate. Sed aliquam, urna ut sollicitudin molestie, lacus justo aliquam mauris. Interdum aliquam sapien nisi cursus mauris. Nunc hendrerit tortor vitae est placerat ut varius erat posuere. Duis ut nisi in mi eleifend faucibus egestas aliquet arcu. Nam id enim sapien. Nam interdum justo eget nisi pulvinar and condimentum orci bibendum. Integer elementum tempor libero sit amet iaculis. Donec scelerisque, urna id tincidunt ires, nisi nisi lacinia mi, at pellentesque enim mi eu felis. Nullam malesuada egestas tincidunt. Pellentesque nec risus dui. Fusce sed nibh eu odio posuere semper. Etiam pulvinar, mi and molestie vestibulum, neque tellus Raab All rights reserved. ISBN: 978-1-4299-0798-9 CHAPTER 1A Fiery SaintIf I betray my friends and family, me and my soul will burn in hell like this saint. As Tony Accetturo recited this grave oath, the holy image in his hand perished in the flames. A group of men nodding at the stone face lined up to kiss him, kiss him on the cheek and shake his hand vigorously, a collective gesture of solemn congratulations. For Accetturo, it was the most memorable moment of his life. The ceremony burned in his soul; his primary ambition was fulfilled. He was now the newest member of an exclusive and secret coterie: he was a made man in the American mafia. Twenty years of loyal service, first as a severe shark loan executor and later as a major employee, moneymaker, for prominent mobsters in New Jersey, had paid a lot for Accetturo. Earlier in the afternoon, he intuitively understood that this day would be important. His orders were to meet Joe Abate, a reclusive figure who rarely met face-to-face with under-stoking, even though their lucrative extortion, gambling and loan-user rackets enriched him. Abate, a sagacious capo in a borgata or brugard - mafia slang for a criminal gang that is derived from the Sicilian word for a close-knit community or hamlet - oversaw all operations in New Jersey for the Lucchese crime family. Abate was waiting for Accetturo at a pre-ready location in the Port Authority's bustling bus terminal in Midtown Manhattan. As a capo or captain, Abate was the impresario of more than a hundred gangsters, who illegally collected millions of dollars each year for themselves and, as tithing, sent part of their income to the administration, Lucchese heads of family across the Hudson River in New York. Already in the mid-seventy years, Abate did not look like a pensioner. Tall, lean, almost ramrod in erection, he greeted Accetturo with a superficial handshake and walked briskly from the bus station. In June 1976, there were few conversations when Accetturo, almost forty years younger than his capo, accelerated his pace to follow the energetic older man. Accetturo, a hoop, muscled two hundred pounds on a five-foot-eight-inch frame, knew of a bitter encounter with Abate never to initiate small discussions with him. Among the mafiosi of New Jersey, Joe Abate was a dreaded presence, a veteran fighter with an exalted aura. He had been a shooter for Al Capone in Chicago when Capone was America's most famous gangster in the 1920s. And in Abate's presence, it was prudent to answer his questions directly and carry out his commandments without A few blocks from the bus station, in a garment factory at the Garment Center in Manhattan, Abate introduced Accetturo to a dark-faced man who was taking them to another location. He was Andrimo Tom Pappadio, a senior soldier in charge of the vast extortion of labor, book making and loan-loan rackets from the Lucchese to the Garment Center. As the brief walk to the Garment District, the thirty-minute drive was a quiet journey until they stopped in front of a single-frame house. Unfamiliar with much of New York, Accetturo thought they were in the Bronx, the borough just north of Manhattan.Inside a dull living room, several unknown men from Accetturo were waiting and one of them introduced himself as Tony Corallo. Accetturo knew that on the island planet of the mafia, this man without a smile, short and trapi in his sixties was widely recognized under another name, Tony Ducks. And he fully understood what that name meant. Antonio Corallo, whose nickname was born from a life of escape from arrests and subpoenas, was the boss of the entire Lucchese family. The small group of men gathered in the living room for a reason: a secret ceremony that would transform Accetturo into a Man of Honour, a made man in his own right. Tony Accetturo knew that books, the membership lists in New York's five mafia families, had been closed for twenty years. Recently, whispers abound that the reels have finally been reopened for deserving people. Accetturo had agonized about his future, eager to end his long apprenticeship with the coveted membership as a soldier. Making your bones, the euphemism of the mafia for passing its entrance exam, requires participating in a violent crime - often murder - or becoming a big earner for the family. Accetturo was convinced that he had made his bones with high marks in both categories. Accetturo had heard older men drop clues about the ritual of getting done. He had a vague idea that he implied the incantation of old oaths of loyalty, sworn on a gun, a knife, a photo of a saint, and validated by a bloodletting through a cut trigger finger. Yet, at the end of his ceremony, Accetturo was surprised and slightly disappointed by his brevity. Without a preamble, Tony Ducks got up from his chair in the living room, said, Let's start, and then bluntly told Accetturo that he was the boss of the family. Accetturo received a picture of a saint on a square piece of paper, said to burn it with a match, and repeat the darkly intoned Corallo oath: If I betray my friends and family, me and my soul will burn in hell like this saint. Despite the abruptness and informality of the rite, Accetturo shone inwardly with enthusiasm for its significantness. I was full of excitement. It was the greatest honor of my life. They set me apart from ordinary people, in a secret society that I had wanted to be a part of since I was a child, since my teenage years. Shortly afterwards, back in his lairs in New Jersey, Accetturo learned of the older men facts, who could now speak openly with him because he had reached the prized adherence, the reason for the Initiation. Abate and other supervisors of the Lucchese family were thinking so much about his accomplishments and behaviour that the traps used to inculcate ordinary recruits were deemed unnecessary. He already knew the basic rules and was considered far superior and better informed of the mafia code of conduct than most new soldiers. There was no doubt that he was adapted to life. Over the next two decades, Accetturo would witness himself and learn from his underworld buddies how a more typical induction was performed by the American mafia in the late 20th and early 21st century. The ritual, modelled on secret practices with religious overskwards initiated by the mafia in Sicily as early as the 19th century, was intended to mark the vital passage of the wannabe, an associate of the criminal family, a simple striver without prestige, to a small rank with extraordinary dividends and extraordinary obligations. While the liturgy was pretty much the same across the country, in the New York area, the recognized capital of the American mafia, a rigid formula prevailed among its five long-established gangs. The candidate was to be sponsored by the capo for whom he would work and personally authorized by the ultimate leader, the family representative, or the boss. The final examination was the submission of the soldier's identity proposed to the leaders of the other four borgatas for verification to determine whether there were any black marks or negative information against him. To maintain the fixed sizes and strength of families and to prevent unauthorized expansions, a potential member could not be added to replace a dead mafioso in his borgata. Although he probably assumed that his induction was looming, the recruit was never specifically told what was in store or when he would be righted, promoted. On short notice, she was asked to dress in a suit and tie for an unspecified assignment. The members actually picked up and escorted the initiated to the ordination. On the way to the site, a process known as cleaning or dry cleaning was often used to evade possible police surveillance. Passengers can change cars in public garages. They also drove aimlessly for as long as half an hour, then square blocks, driving slowly with sharp sharp turns, or reversed directions to shake investigators who might be following them on routine surveillance. The special precautions were intended to conceal the meeting place from prying eyes, mainly because the boss of the family and other high-ranking would be present and protecting them from law enforcement spies was a paramount consideration. Unlike the ceremony he conducted for Accetturo, at most the inductions Tony Ducks Corallo officiated with more pomp and formality. Do you know why you're here? » falsely. No. This charade was promulgated because the induction was presumed to be a well-kept secret to prevent leaks to law enforcement investigators and foreigners about the identity of family leaders and its members. Continuing, Ducks explained: You're going to be part of this family. Do you have any objections to that? Another member of the group circling the ceremonial table would then use a needle, knife or safety pin to prick the candidate's trigger finger, dropping blood in a photo of a saint. As the candidate held the bloody image aloft, someone put a match to it, and Tony Ducks ordered the new member to repeat: Can I burn, let my soul burn like this paper, If I betray someone in this family or someone in this room. After scattering the ashes of the holy image of the saint, Corallo or one of his lieutenants warned the new man that from now on the needs of the borgates — including committing murder — came before any other obligation in his life. The initiate no longer had allegiance to God, the country, his wife, his children or his close relatives, only to the family of the crime. The decrees of the boss, who ruled as the father of the family, must be immediately respected, even if it meant neglecting a dying child. At the ceremony for Tommy Ricciardi, a longtime acolyte of Accetturo, Tony Ducks and his henchmen carefully listed the family and the inviolable rules and protocols of the mafia. The most important principle was omertà, the code of silence that forbade any cooperation with law enforcement, or even more worryingly, informing, rattling on anyone in the underworld. A new button man, or soldier, remained under the direct control of the capo who recommended his membership. All illegal activities in the soldier and even his legal activities were registered or registered with the family through his capo so that the organization could take advantage of these projects and use them for crime and transaction planning. Loot of legal and illegal activities was shared with the soldier's capo: a percentage, depending on the mood of the boss, was channeled to him as a sign of respect and was also used for the needs and overheads of the borgata. In business or social, only a man made of the Lucchese family and other borgatas could be introduced to other mafiosi as an amico nostro, a friend of ours. Other associates or working with the mafia have been referred simply as a friend, or my friend, as a warning signal that the third man has not been made and no mafia secrets should be in his presence. And the awesome word Mafia was banned from the band's vocabulary. Its use, even in private conversations, was prohibited because it could be considered incriminating evidence at trial if it was heard by prosecution witnesses or detected by wiretap investigators. Instead, if an organizational name be mentioned, the most innocent ringing Cosa Nostra, Our Thing, or the initials C.N. were used. Despite any knowledge that the recruit might possess at the time of his initiation, he nevertheless received formal instructions on the composition and powers of the family hierarchy. At the summit, the boss established policies on the crimes and rackets that the family would engage and appointed and removed capos and other high-ranking leaders. Like an imperial Caesar, the boss's most terrifying arbitrary authority was to decide who lived and died. Murders inside the family for internal reasons or the elimination of anyone outside the borgata could only be punished by him. Usually present at the induction ceremonies were the sub-corps, the second-in-command, who helped manage the day-to-day affairs of the family, and the consigliere, the counselor on family matters and on relationships and disputes with other mafia groups. During Lucchese's induction, the identity of the bosses of The four other major New York mafia families (Genovese, Gambino, Bonanno and Colombo) and a smaller (DeCavalcante) based in New Jersey were disclosed to the new soldier. This confidential information came with the warning that if another family boss was met, it should be accorded the utmost respect. Finally, several New York families concluded their ceremony with a ticada, Italian for tie-in or a tack-up. To demonstrate the internal solidarity of their secret organization, all the witnesses and the new member shook hands to unite in what the boss declared the unbreakable knot of brotherhood. Alphonso D'Arco's big day in the Lucchese family took place on August 23, 1982. He was ordered to dress, you go somewhere by his capo, picked up at a street corner in the Little Italy section of Manhattan, and as Tony Accetturo drove to a modest house in the Bronx. Four other candidates were seated in the living room, waiting to be summoned to another room, a kitchen. When D'Arco's turn came, it was introduced to Tony Ducks Corallo and other members of the administration sitting around a table. Do you know why you are here? asked one of the men, and D'Arco dutifully replied: No. You're going to be part of this family, the man continued. If you were asked to kill someone, would you? D'Arco nodded his assent, then his trigger finger was stung and the picture of the burnt saint. One of the men around the table removed a towel that covered a gun and a knife lying on the table. You live by the gun and the knife and you by the weapon and the knife if you betray someone in this room, said the speaker darkly. Finally, D'Arco repeated a version of the holy oath of the mafia: If I betray my friends and family, let my soul burn in hell like this saint. Later, when the ceremony for all the recruits was over, Corallo Ducks got up and asked everyone to attaccata, nail or tie by Hands. La fata di questa famiglia sono aperti Corallo announced, which means that the business of this family is open. He then lectured his new soldiers on the basic principles, precepts etched in D'Arco's memory. We were told not to deal with narcotics, counterfeit money or stolen stocks and obligations, to respect families or other members, and not to joke with the wives or daughters of other members. If disputes arise that you and members cannot resolve, you must go to your captain. You don't get your hands on other members of your family. You must maintain yourself with respect at all times. When your captain calls, no matter the time, day or night, you must respond immediately. This family comes in front of your own family. Above all, you do not discuss anything about this family with members of other families. If you don't follow these rules, you'll be killed. Corallo imposed another unbreakable rule: the police and other law enforcement officers could never be hit and killed. Everything that happened here tonight should never be discussed, Corallo warned. Asking the group to pull itself together, he concludes in Italian: La fata di questa famiglia sono chiusi (The affairs of this family are now closed.) The afternoon ended on a non-alcoholic and sober note with coffee, simple snacks and pastries offered to men in front of the old hands and freshly minted mafias scattered in small groups. D'Arco would learn that Corallo banned any involvement in narcotics and counterfeiting and theft of stocks and bonds because they were federal offences and meant a heavy prison sentence. Corallo, like other mafia leaders, had good reason to prevent strikes on law enforcement personnel. Murdering a cop, investigator or prosecutor would unleash the wrath of the law against the mafia and make normal business dangerous. In addition, the rule was intended to maintain strict discipline and to prevent reckless and unauthorized acts by burned-headed troops. The day after the induction ceremony, D'Arco was the guest of honour at a special dinner with other crew members, given by his capo. It was an opportunity for him and the twenty or so members of his crew to be presented to each other on an equal footing. D'Arco's new companions explained to him with a laugh what would have happened if he had refused at the Bronx ceremony to accept membership in the borgata: He would have been killed on the spot. His refusal would have been evidence that he was an agent or informant trying to infiltrate the family. Excerpt from Five Families by Selwyn Raab. Copyright © 2005 Selwyn Raab. Excerpted courtesy of St. Martin's Press. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt can be reproduced or reprinted without written permission from the publisher. Excerpts are provided by Dial-A-Book Inc. only for the personal use of visitors to this website. Site. Site.

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